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The Yosemite

THE YOSEMITE

A Spiritual Interpretation

BY HERBERT ATCHINSON JUMP

10209

DESIGNED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
E. RUSSEL LORD-WOOD



*"I've stood in some mighty-mouthed hollow
That's plumb-full of hush to the brim;
I've watched the big, husky sun wallow
In crimson and gold, and grow dim,
Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming,
And the stars tumbled out, neck and crop;
And I've thought that I surely was dreaming,
With the peace o' the world piled on top."*

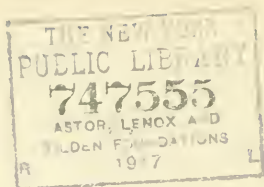
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By HERBERT ATCHINSON JUMP

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To My Wife

than whom no more refreshing
camp-mate and no pluckier trail-
companion ever accompanied an
explorer into the uplands of the
California High Sierra.



Illustrations

El Capitan, photograph *Frontispiece*

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Foreword

The history of this little book began with a summer Sunday evening talk to friends and nature lovers gathered round a crackling camp-fire in Camp Curry, Yosemite Valley. But its message has grown in the mind of the author as he has for four years snatched every possible opportunity to drive his automobile to the foothills of the Sierra, and then with blanket and mule and congenial companion has plunged into the silent cañon and climbed toward the high, eternally snowy hinterland. Whether his prime love is for the Shasta region, or the Glen Alpine country back of Lake Tahoe, or the terrific Kings' River Cañon, or the mountain bastions sur-

rounding the Tuolumne Meadows, or the more pastoral San Bernardino Range, or for the better known and altogether unsurpassed Yosemite Valley itself, he cannot determine. But this conviction has slowly become certitude, that in all his journeyings in search of scenic beauty, whether to Alaska or Alberta, to Norway or Switzerland or Northern Africa, he nowhere has found congested in one comparatively small district as much variety, dramatic sublimity, and alluring picturesqueness as in the California Sierra. The ever-increasing stream of intelligent tourist travel toward these mountains, the far-sighted wisdom that is constructing automobile highways and government trails into the very heart of the amazing grandeur, and the slowly growing consciousness that the slogan "see America first" is common sense

as well as patriotism, — these are but symptoms of that new appreciation of California which is spreading abroad over all the United States.

H. A. J.

Redlands, California

The Yosemite

A SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION

Those who seek the Yosemite Valley seriously are bound together in a freemasonry of sentiment. They are all lovers—lovers of God's exquisitely beautiful world. Nature, speaking in one of her most dramatic and eloquent moods, has summoned them thither. In this incomparable vale are to be found immensities and profundities, arrogant magnitudes and silent mightinesses, spectacles of time-defying power matched by vistas of thought-o'erwhelming space, the old earth-crust upheaved into a climax of granite oratory, mountains marshalled in stupendous landscape rhetoric. So men bring their souls to the

Yosemite to feed upon God's handiwork. It were the tragedy of tragedies if men should forget that the handiwork is God's.



The Valley from Artist's Point

Inspiration and Re-inspiration



HE is fortunate who has his first view of the Valley from Inspiration Point. In an instant the whole picture of pinnacle and cataract, dome and depth, is revealed to the eager sight. It is as when the caretaker in some cloister pulls aside the dusty curtain concealing the painting by an old master, and in a flash beauty is unveiled that dumbfounds the beholder. The apt name given this viewpoint immediately justifies it-

self. But the wonder is that the "inspiration" thus gloriously born does not fade away as the days elapse.

When Ralph Waldo Emerson was leaving Williamstown, Massachusetts, after delivering a lecture before the students of Williams College, a few of the undergraduates accompanied him to the railroad station. While waiting for his train, he gazed appreciatively at the marvellous rim of hills, "Greylock" and the other noble Berkshires, by which the horizon was bounded. "I should think, young gentlemen," he said, "that you would print the names of these mountains in your college catalogue along with the members of the faculty."

A month in the Yosemite is a university course in spiritual emotion. One goes to school to these heights that girdle his soul. Lessons are

to be learned from Sentinel Peak and Half Dome, from Cloud's Rest and Yosemite Point, from Liberty Cap and El Capitan, from all the magic pageantry of vapor and solar glory, and from the ever-changing poetry of blossom, tree and star.

But inspiration goes deeper than to make the heart feel that it is in school. It provokes the continuous consciousness that the place whereon we stand is holy ground. Here the appropriate mood is worship. It is John Muir's exquisite insight to the effect that the vale of the Yosemite looked at from its western end is architecturally like a huge temple lighted from above. Ought it not to possess a cathedral-like value to the tourist who visits it? Do we not miss the best of the Yosemite experience unless it awakens the more august voices that

address the soul, and causes us to hear the reverberating syllables of eternity?

The power of the Yosemite to uplift its sympathetic disciple may be taken for granted. It is indubitable. But not every disciple tries to analyze the sources of the impression made upon him. Why is this peerless chasm so awe-compelling? Where lies the secret of its appeal?



Vernal Falls

Factors in the Impression



HE waterfalls are part of Yosemite's power. Would you learn the majesty of motion? Lean against the iron rail at the top of the Upper Yosemite Falls when it is flowing in its June flood; or better still, peer over the brink of rock above the Illilouette Falls. It seems as though you are close to the throbbing heart of some colossal engine. The Moors knew the esthetic charm of running water. Having crossed over from the

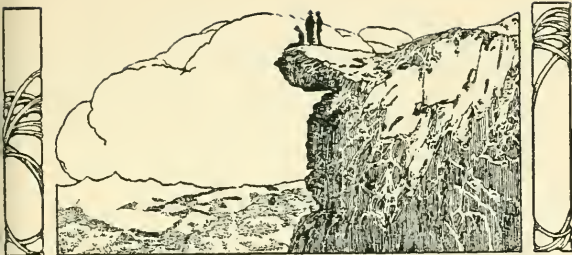
burning sands of Africa, they made Granada a paradise vocal everywhere with the tinkle of sparkling rivulets. But it is a more austere beauty that characterizes the moving waters of the Yosemite. They speak not of fairies and delicate maidens, but of giants, puissant gods and unconquerable goddesses. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of their waterspouts.

The trees also are elements in Yosemite's power. In them we read bold gospels of patience. When we were visiting one day the Mariposa Grove of Sequoias, which is really an annex to the Yosemite, a group of us were seated carelessly on a stump in front of the cabin. The man who knew remarked quietly, "That tree stump on which you are sitting, gentlemen, is sixteen hundred years old." I jumped as though I had been detected in the crime of desecrating

some monument. Who was I, an upstart of the newly-born century, to be sitting, actually sitting upon sixteen centuries of human history? Nowhere among living things is the waiting power of the Almighty proclaimed as eloquently as in this forest of century-old giants.

Nor must we overlook the enthusiasm of effort that seems to afflict the very atmosphere in the Yosemite, and that sends every mother's son of us off into adventures upon the trails. "I never walked so far in all my life" — how often this confession is overheard round the camp fire at night. But we are all the better for it. The powers of our physical being stand revealed. We may suffer a bit from the popular Yosemite diseases — the "Glacier limp," the "Yosemite kink," or "trail-itis," but a worthy pride of achievement abundantly conquers any muscu-

lar weariness. We are happy because we really "did something" in the Valley, and we seek its precarious zigzags again next summer.



Glacier Point

Yosemite: A Study in Heights



UT the waterfalls, the trees, the trails, are all minor members on the Yosemite faculty of instruction. The most potent teachers and preachers are the vertical vastnesses, the omnipresent upstretching altitudes, the reaches toward the sky that tax the physique, defy the senses and all but stun the imagination. Yosemite is a peerless assortment of heights. Its forty domes are incomparable. From the moment we enter the Valley

our necks are craned with upward gazing. The crests stir us with their sunrise beauty; they welcome the sunsets and hold them for our delight. Yosemite, more than any other of the world's playgrounds, is a symphony in the perpendicular dimension.

Universally, men have felt that the Creator wrote parables of moral truth into the universe when He created it, even as a skillful novelist weaves a purpose into his masterpiece of fiction. And always the vertical dimension has suggested spiritual aspiration. The world's heights are a summons toward God and the things of God. They speak faith. Horizontal immensities tell a different tale. They are vocal of tolerance. They affect a man's ethics as the heights affect his religion. After a fortnight in the stupendous desert or on the water plains of the great

ocean, a man ought to treat his fellow men better. After a fortnight in such a place as the Yosemite, he ought to treat his God better. This is the main spiritual asset of the Valley — its heights, by which the soul can make easy ascents into the presence of the Eternal.



The Domes

Mountain Altitudes and Faith



RELIGION and high places have ever belonged together. Jehovah dwelt originally on Mt. Sinai. Jerusalem could the more easily become a Zion because it was surrounded by hills. Jesus' main sermon was uttered on a mount. A cathedral is a convincing piece of architecture because its spires pierce the sky. Faith has ever traveled, like Jacob's angels, along lines of the up and down. Heaven is above; hell is below. The Tower of Babel

climbed; Dante descended into "The Inferno." Mountain heights grip the soul as though with hooks of steel. Beware, therefore, of the man who can be irreverent in the presence of mighty mountains. Guard against the woman who can be flippant as she faces a yawning chasm.

If all heights help the soul to mount toward its better thoughts and nobler life, how rich is the equipment of the Yosemite! With sheer El Capitan, with the loyal Sentinel, with the graceful Cathedral Spires, with the Three Brothers forever watching the Three Graces, with Washington Column insistently asking, Where is Lincoln Column to match me? — with Glacier and Yosemite Points like two racers stretching nip and tuck toward the zenith, with North Dome eternally looking over at Half Dome as though she were

proudly asking, Did you ever see a more glorious rock than that? — and above all, Cloud's Rest ceaselessly proving the correctness of her name — on every hand are the ladders of gray granite by which the nature lover can mount and become a God-worshipper. These heights, once seen, become the standard by which you judge all other heights. They not only fill your existence while you sojourn in the Valley, but long after you have returned to the workaday world, they will loom in your dreams, high, fine, pure, calm, strong, beckoning your soul eagerly to enter into loftier fellowship with the Eternal. And there is a two-fold exhortation which the pinnacles of this nature's masterpiece make to the soul.

THE YOSEMITE

I

MAKE YOUR LIFE A MINIATURE YOSEMITE

Let every man make of his life a miniature Yosemite by surrounding each day's experience with high places. By whatever method the matchless domes of the Valley were carved out, whether by ice or water, at least we who now visit the Yosemite had nothing to do with their manufacture. We found them here, majestically and silently here, when we arrived. But we can assist in the creation of our soul's landscape. We have the power to build heights into our lives. From the natural charms of this peerless vale we can learn how to add spiritual charms to our inner being.

In the experience of most persons life tends to be a plain. Monotony and drudgery are our

perpetual portion. But out of this plain we should raise the high places that can inspire. We should add to the day's landscape mountain retreats where the soul can see God face to face.

One such mountain retreat is the reading of a noble book. It was in the midst of his most turbulent days as governor of New York and champion of the people against the "interests," that Mr. Hughes confessed to the habit of turning each night, after the day's battles were over, to the pages of Epictetus. In the brave philosophy of that ancient worthy he found the wisdom and the encouragement which his soul craved. And there is a book even more useful for this purpose than Epictetus. The Bible is a compendium of courages. It is a roll call of heroes. It is a dictionary of seership. It is an hall of fame for the pre-eminent

moralties. It is a trumpet call from the Infinite. It is food and drink and solace and rest and uplift for the needy sons of men. To it, as unto the hills, the soul should lift up its eyes for help.

Another high place of the soul is the meditation-moment. Especially here in the Yosemite must we guard our time and program lest we lose this supreme privilege of being solitary amid mighty things. It is poor mountaineering to go off alone on these trails, but it is good poetry and excellent religion. Many a visitor to the Valley never sees a sublime feature of this wonderland alone. Always there is a crowd along to distract with comment and chatter. John Muir was wiser. He used to tramp in the midnight moonlit hours. The still, small voice has to be wooed in solitude. If the moments of rapturous meditation

become moments of prayer, so much the better. Perhaps the right use of the Yosemite privilege will enable you all the more easily to build mountain moments into the flat humdrum of your living after you return to your familiar place and task.

But there is a better kind of high place than either the lofty book or the lofty moment. This is the lofty personality. Every life should be dominated by an incarnate ideal. No matter who you are or where you live, you can hold deep inner communion with some supreme personality. From this noble and ennobling object of devotion, blessing will flow down into all the lowlands of your existence.

Here let us use the Yosemite even more specifically than we have done hitherto to furnish us with an analogy. Of all the

heights that make the Valley incomparable, El Capitan is the most unforgettable. And there is no one of us but supposes his knowledge of Spanish to be sufficient for translating the name. I was told, however, a while ago, that the popular translation was quite inadequate.

“El Capitan,” according to my informant, was the title given by the old padres to God. What was done, therefore, sometime in the undefined past, was the splendidly daring thing of naming this stupendous cliff with the very name of the Almighty! How true the poetry of it! How fitting the suggestion! “God” ushers us into the temple of the Yosemite. “God” is our first impression upon coming in, our last impression on going out.



El Capitan

The Christ of El Capitan



OR me personally another and most helpful mental association has come to pass. El Capitan is to me not so much a symbol of God as a symbol of Christ, God revealed in man. In that unrivalled wall of granite, ascending perpendicularly three thousand feet above the beholder, I seem to see humanity at its height, my own soul raised to its divinest potencies in Jesus. He is the Perfect Man revealed as a challenge to all of us imperfect

men. The heights of the Yosemite lead me to God, but they lead me thither by way of the God-man. El Capitan is my Captain, "the captain of my salvation," the Christ.

Many a Christian unfortunately has in his theology a Christ for whom this rugged, masculine, forthright rock would be an untrue symbol. He thinks of Jesus in feminine terms, or as a dreamy poet-artist. I, too, claim for my El Capitan Christ those softer qualities, but I find them bulwarked and steadied by a strength like the strength of a man. There is moss on the rock, but there is rock underneath the moss; and so virile was Jesus' manhood, so real his vision of truth, so sane his tenderness toward his fellow humans that Christ, the El Capitan Christ, becomes the lofty personality whom every soul might

well install as the supreme human "high place" in his spiritual landscape. There is no allegiance that so exalts a person as allegiance to the Son of Man. "Men are all mosaics of other men," Henry Drummond used to declare. In the mosaic of my character, therefore, I will ask the El Capitan Christ to contribute the main pieces and to determine the dominant color.

II

THE HIGH PLACES ARE NOT FOR
RESIDENCE

Having made of his life a miniature Yosemite by building round about it a circle of spiritual high places, the man has yet another truth to learn. And the Yosemite will teach him forcefully this second lesson. He must not expect to live forever on the high places. His life will continue to be on the

plain, but he must make the highlands pour benedictions down upon the lowlands.

When visiting the Valley to achieve a few of the heights, the tourist surely goes up to Glacier Point; perhaps he adds Eagle Peak; and if strength abides in his bones, he includes North Dome and Cloud's Rest. But who would think of camping all the time on one of these highlands and learning the Valley only from that point of view? No, the heights make the Yosemite, but we approach them from the Valley floor, and we bring back from them to the Valley floor the zest of far horizons and the tingle of the rarer upper air.

In another way the heights serve us. They are the sources of the waterfall beauty of the Yosemite. The first question asked by our party as we entered the Valley and looked on Bridal Veil Falls

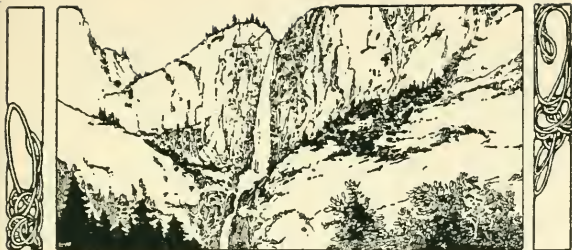
and the entrancing Yosemite Falls opposite was, Where does all the water come from? It comes from the High Sierra, from innumerable peaks and slopes and cañons and glades seldom visited by the casual tourist. One hundred and eleven lakes on the higher levels feed the cascades and streams of the Yosemite. And when I took my excursion into the remoter highlands, still I found myself asking the question in Tuolumne meadows and elsewhere, Where does the water all come from? Ever the highlands back yonder are pouring their glacial streams down into the lowlands; and if their altitudes are seldom explored and their undying snowfields seldom traversed, it is but the usual fate of the benefactor. Helpful ministry and oblivion have always been bedfellows.

It is with the soul as it is with

this Valley. The highlands of exquisite and leisurely fellowship with books, thoughts, persons, cannot be abiding places. It were unwise to erect the three tabernacles on the Transfiguration Mount. Religious exaltation of a high pressure sort cannot be perpetual for most souls. The enthusiasm of the first discovery of spiritual reality must in the nature of the case ultimately flag. The experience of Christ cannot be an endless "hallelujah chorus" with a full organ accompaniment. There should be crescendos in the soul's career, but they by no means destroy the diminuendos, or make unnecessary the pianissimos. Abt Vogler mounts into the musical empyrean on the palace of sound which his skill erects, but at the end he has to sink back to the C major of our common life.

Yes, but though Abt Vogler

comes back to the C major, he is a different and a nobler being because he has tasted the ecstasy. The rapture makes the C major more intelligible, more liveable, more lovable. The task laid upon us who have visited the Valley is to tie up Inspiration Point in the Yosemite with an ordinary-looking schoolroom in San Francisco or Chicago or Boston. We should say a wedding service, uniting the thrill of Glacier Point and the humdrum of a grocery store counter in Denver or New York. Out of the enthusiasms, the blisses, the breathless appreciation of these wondrous days, we should build a more loyal service to our fellow men, a more grateful devotion to God the giver of all this glory, a larger and purer inner life for each one of our souls. Thus the highlands will serve the lowlands, the message of the Yosemite will be learned.



Yosemite Falls

A Waterfall Parable



ONE memorable day
I sat by the side
of Yosemite Creek
above the Falls. A
twig swirled swiftly
by on the surface of
the stream. The bit
of wood seemed like
a prisoner caught in the countless
riffles of green water that were
sweeping it to its aerial doom.
Suppose that same green water
could think, what ought to be its
emotions as it leaves the rocky
bed along which it has been sliding,
and plunges out into space through

nearly a third of a mile of vertical drop? Back in the highlands it was born in some silent bank of snow or ice; it has journeyed far through the wild grandeur of unpopulated cañons; it has known the sweet liberty of the impulsive mountain brook. But after this plunge through space it will come into the world of people. It will see houses and roads. It will flow through human civilization. It will be harnessed between the banks of a slow-marching river. It will find work to do of service to the social order. It will pour fertility into grain fields, add juices to many a species of fruit, yield up its powers to turn buzzing machinery, give life to beast and man, and roll peacefully on toward the great sea, distributing its ministry all over the lowlands.

Shall we not catch and use this parable of the Yosemite water?

Shall we not descend from the mountain fastness of this sublime chasm into the world of men, resolute to put into our living more of the stern, clean qualities of the highlands? When the sad day arrives that compels a farewell to the gray rocks and the white waters, the green meadows and the rainbow-tinted flowers, the wholesome trees and the plenteous ferns that spell out the altogether satisfying charm of this "gorge of the great grizzly bear," — as your conveyance slips down the Valley toward El Portal and the problems of life, perform for the sake of your soul this little ritual of affection:

Look backward once again toward the ineffable kingly dignity of El Capitan. In that brave front of granite, high-browed and erect toward the sun, see with your imagination's eye a picture

of the Christ, challenging, inspiring, dominating, commanding you. See Him urging you into the thick of things with an apostolic commission to help bring His strength and purity into the world's life. See Him boldly summoning you to join Him in resistance to all cheap compromise, all convenient insincerity, all lazy cowardice that masquerades under the name of tact. See Him inviting you to share His patience, His long-suffering beneath the battering storms, His calm and unapologetic faith in the final invincibility of truth. See Him, the eternal, self-giving Christ, rooted deep in the earth but stretching His aspiring height toward the skies, — the union of the seer and the man of affairs, the fusion of the dreamer and the soldier. If thus, as you leave the Valley, the El Capitan Christ dismisses you with His blessing and

THE YOSEMITE

His imperatives, then you will
bring into the everyday world a
spiritual message from the Yosem-
ite. You will become indeed a
mountain soul, like her of whom
Katharine Lee Bates has sung:

“A mountain soul, she shines in crystal air
Above the smokes and clamors of the
town.

Her pure, majestic brows serenely wear
The stars for crown.

“She comrades with the child, the bird,
the fern,

Poet and sage and rustic chimney-nook;
But Pomp must be a pilgrim ere he learn
Her mountain look, —

“Her mountain look, the candor of the
snow,

The strength of folded granite, and the
calm

Of choiring pines whose swayed green
branches strow
A healing balm.”

THE END



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